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The Director of Central Intelligence

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Washington, D. C. 20505

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6 December 1979

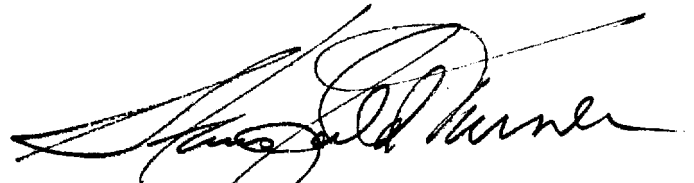
ALERT MEMORANDUM

MEMORANDUM FOR: National Security Council

SUBJECT : Thai-Kampuchean Border

The Vietnamese are placing Thailand under intense pressure to accept their consolidation of control in Kampuchea. This pressure will increase as the Vietnamese escalate operations to eliminate resistance in the border areas of western and northern Kampuchea. The Thai Government would doubtless turn to the United States for support, possibly invoking the Manila Pact. China may appear another avenue of recourse. If, in the Thai view, neither US nor Chinese support is sufficient, they may feel impelled to seek an accommodation with Vietnam. [REDACTED]

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## THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

National Intelligence Officers

6 December 1979

ALERT MEMORANDUM\*

## Thai-Kampuchean Border

A combination of factors could lead to rapid deterioration of the situation along the Thai-Kampuchean border. When Vietnam exerts even greater military pressure against the anti-Vietnamese resistance in Kampuchea--as it plans to do later this month--fighting could occur across the Thai-Kampuchean border to such an extent that the Thai armed forces would be unable to cope. In addition, the government could be faced with an intolerable refugee burden and increased political criticism. Should the Thai see their security imperiled by Vietnamese military operations, they would doubtless appeal for US aid, possibly under the terms of the Manila Pact. Thailand would probably also seek increased Chinese military pressure on Vietnam. If, in the Thai view, neither US nor Chinese support is sufficient, they might feel impelled to seek some accommodation with Vietnam.

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*\*The Alert Memorandum is an interagency publication issued by the Director of Central Intelligence on behalf of the Intelligence Community. Its purpose is to ensure that senior policymakers are aware of the serious implications for US interests of impending potential developments. It is not a prediction that these developments will occur. This memorandum has been coordinated by CIA, DIA, NSA, State/INR, and the Strategic Warning Staff.*

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If, by accident or design, a significant engagement occurred between Thai and Vietnamese forces, and the former did not acquit themselves well, the situation would take on an even graver character. A major Thai defeat could constitute sufficient reason for China to teach Vietnam a second lesson; this, in turn, could invite a greater Soviet response. Besides the threat of wider international military involvement, there are domestic implications for Thailand as well. At this point, Prime Minister Kriangsak seems to have a fairly secure hold on power and the support of the Thai Army and its Commander, General Prem. A major Thai military reverse, however, could embolden Kriangsak's civilian and military critics. In particular, they might try to topple the government by exploiting such issues as the alleged Thai support for Kampuchean resistance forces, especially if such support were regarded as a provocation for a Vietnamese attack. Faced with political downfall, Kriangsak might be prompted to call upon the United States and China to provide military assistance against an external threat and to preserve his government. Likely principals in a new Thai Government would probably not alter internal policies significantly, but a successor to the current Prime Minister would be freer to begin seeking an accommodation with Vietnam.

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The continuing massive influx of refugees, which the Vietnamese offensive will certainly aggravate, could alone have serious consequences for Kriangsak. The Thai Government and international aid

*\*State/INR believes it important to state that currently there are no indications that Vietnam is planning a major attack on Thailand.*

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agencies are already struggling to aid the nearly three quarters of a million Kampuchean refugees in Thailand. Although Thailand's present humanitarian policy of admitting refugees has public support, the refugee issue has aroused domestic opposition in the past, particularly when it appeared that Thailand was being forced to assume too much of the burden. The area of Vietnamese operations harbors large numbers of refugees. Some quarter million are estimated encamped in Kampuchea within 75 kilometers of the border town of Poipet alone, and the Vietnamese might decide that the more it can push out of the country, the easier its job of pacification will be. The Thai fear that there may be as many as a million more potential refugees in western Kampuchea. If the refugee situation deteriorates and the international community, particularly the United States, does not respond promptly with increased assistance and cooperation, Kriangsak's political opponents would have a readymade issue to exploit. [REDACTED]

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The pressures outlined above are beyond the capabilities of the Thai to control adequately on their own. Should fighting spread across the border in a major way, the Thai will face an array of military and political issues that could force them to seek outside assistance, first from the United States, but also from China. If the Thai should believe that sufficient support is not forthcoming from either quarter, they might find it necessary to seek some accommodation with Vietnam.

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